

ASTRID PROLL



WELL, the ingenuity this paper referred to in its last issue has already come into play. While no-one was looking, asleep, away or drinking in the bar, an Order of Council was 'laid before Parliament' on 2 October, making a fundamental change in the extradition treaty between Britain and West Germany and having direct relevance to Astrid Proll. Lawyers seem only to have discovered it by accident. All of a sudden a UK citizen may be extradicted should the Home Secretary (as he invariably does) see fit.

Contrary to FREEDOM's earlier report the Suppression of Terrorism Act came into force only this week, and thus too late to cover Astrid's case; but this has not (and will not) stopped the authorities from getting what they want by simply changing the rules a bit.

Meanwhile, the Friends of Astrid Proll are continuing to produce press releases and pamphlets as well as to picket Bow Street Magistrates' Court every Tuesday from 10 am onwards. Their pamphlet 'Astrid Proll. The case against her extradition' is available from 'Friends of Astrid Proll', 109 Backchurch Lane, London E.1. Cheques to FAP, Acct. No. 50062315 Coop Bank, Leman St, E.1.

You can help by affiliating to the campaign, either as an individual or as an organisation; making public statements of support for Astrid, passing union resolutions; sending donations; writing to papers, MPs etc., speaking on radio phone-in programmes, putting up posters at your place of work, collecting signatures for F.A.P. petition.

Persons Unknown

'Persons Unknown Huddersfield' are preparing a petition to the Home Secretary protesting about the conditions under which Iris Mills is being held and demanding her immediate transfer to Holloway. Copies of the petition can be obtained from: 173 Yews Hill Road, Lockwood, Huddersfield, HD1 3SP.

down under

ABOUT 30 people turned up at British Airways on Thursday, 6 October. Groups of 'unknown persons' (mostly masked) picketed in protest at the forthcoming conspiracy trial and lack of bail for the six British 'dissidents'. Graffiti denouncing the growing British police state, and stickers denouncing the Anti-Terrorist Squad were abundant. Anarcha-feminists, IWV General Defence Committee local no. 5, black flags, sandwich board posters and signs announced to passers-by and BA employees the six names and the falsehood of the 'conspiracy' charges. Some songs (to be collected for the forthcoming Black & Red songbook) were sung, statements deep and profound warbled, and generally morale stayed high.

Police began to move in, so due to our mobility we moved on into the street, against the oncoming traffic. We put down the present State elections and celebrated the Pope's death (at whose hands?) as we arrived at St James (a busy) railway station. Short but precise speeches were made to the commuter crowds and then we marched on to the Sydney Town Hall. As it was late night shopping many leaflets were given out. A car load of cretins tried to run through the crowd but we were able to dent the offending commodity a few times as it passed. The owners complained to the POLICE who then found us again. After an exciting chase a woman was captured for 'offensive behaviour'; she was later released on \$50 bail! As police numbers grew we decided to disband, especially to get our comrade released.

PETER VERIL (Sydney Anarchists) THE Persons Unknown case continues much as before. Trevor Dawton has had his bail extended for a further three weeks. At the hearing where this occurred (no other bail in sight) the magistrate indicated that it was about time the police made some moves towards committal. Something is expected at the hearing this Thursday (26th). Even after committal it will be several months before

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German Autumn

THE phrase 'autumn in Germany' (Deutschland im Herbst) is no longer so innocent sounding as it was once. It has acquired a special meaning. It has become synonymous with that rapid and tragic chain of events which began back in August 1977 when the prisoners' group in Stammheim was deliberately broken up by the government. The hunger and thirst strike that followed led in its turn to the desperate effort to liberate them through the kidnapping of Schleyer; then came the Mogadishu hijacking and the deaths of Gudrun Ensslin, Jan-Carl

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a.b.c TRIAL

THE prosecution in the ABC trial continues to enjoy itself playing at Secrets and Conspiracies. They are obviously so full of it that they just can't see how ridiculous they are. Even the cheapest TV series wouldn't try to get away with a script like this. Personally I don't find these things entertaining on televis-

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autumn in germany

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Raspe and Andreas Baader, as well as of Schleyer, and of Ingrid Schubert (above) in a men's prison in Munich a few weeks later.

The terrifying climate of that German autumn can be illustrated not only by the self-muzzling of the bourgeois press during the government crisis, but by the frenzied witch hunt against the left radical and anarchist groups, the 'sympathisers' and the 'sympathisers with the sympathisers'. These 'spiritual terrorists', as even liberal Catholic writers like Heinrich Boell were dubbed, were held responsible for the whole development of urban guerrilla war.

But what above all gave that autumn a touch of classic Greek tragedy of the highest order was the row over the burial of the three Stammheim prisoners in the sacred ground of Stuttgart cemetery. It was an astonishing row which can be par-

alleled only with the Sophoclean drama of Antigone. (Save for the ultimate refusal of the Stuttgart mayor, son of General Rommel, to play the role of Creon and leave the bodies outside the city walls).

A year has passed and autumn has come to England. Even though - with the already distant exception of the Angry Brigade - no revolutionary group has yet engaged in armed conflict with the British state, in order to destroy it. Where Britain is concerned it has not been necessary to await such groups. The increasingly repressive nature of the regime here is due to the realisation by the state of the growing weakness of its economic and political, social and moral credibility. As anarchists we are still, perhaps, light years from convincing most people of the viability or even the beauty of our ideas. Yet the malaise with the 'democratic' system is unmistakeable. In the process liberal posturings have become

a luxury for modern government.

In Federal Germany (as the centre pages of this issue show) the legislative is being continually used to rubber stamp practices that are in flagrant conflict with post-war constitutional principles. In Britain, where use of the law has always been more economical, the government doesn't need to whip backbenchers into endorsement of its policies but can merely do so through general (mal)-practice, as in the case of the police, or through an 'exchange of notes' between governments, as in the case of Astrid Proll (see separate news item). Autumn in England has established itself well and truly. But winter follows autumn and, to use another phrase, we must make sure that it'll be a 'Winter of Discontent' - a winter that we can use to develop a revolutionary offensive out of what seem at this moment to be positions of pure defence.

A.B.C

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ion and even less when real consequences could follow. The succession of military witnesses clam up on anything that could be called a fact. One couldn't bring himself to confirm that the Government Communications Headquarters is in Cheltenham, even when shown a recruitment booklet with the address and a photo. 'Secret' now appears to be a retroactive description. A 'secret' is, from this moment in time, whatever the government chooses not to want to talk about. It doesn't matter that everybody knows all about it, if we say it's a secret, then it is. This megalomania is really reaching alarming proportions.

Star of the week has been our old friend Hugh Johnstone. Hugh is shy, as we all know, so we must be grateful that in the public interest he managed to stand up in full public view. Well, some of the time. The court kept going in camera or without a jury, or whatever, all to save the good colonel's embarrassment. He discussed the 'crucial role' of Signals Intelligence, without which 'other services are blind and deaf'. Now, get this one: 'Without contradiction by any expert, I can say that SIGINT is the key component in the overall intelligence effort'. Of course, he has no fear of argument.

The case continues, as they say.

persons unknown

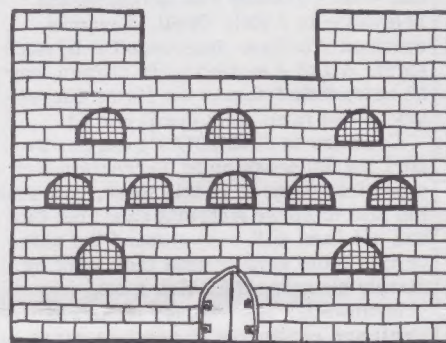
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the trial. Our comrades have now been in maximum security, category A, for up to five months. Taff still has stomach problems. There are also still problems with his mail. One good point: Iris is now allowed a visit after the weekly court appearance.

Routine harassment of support groups goes on. In Manchester an old address was burgled. Money was left behind, but papers were obviously looked through. In Liverpool a member of the local group had occasion to phone the local radio station from a pub. He was told to hang up, as it was a bad line, and he would be phoned back. After a few minutes he became worried and left the pub to walk to a phone box 150 yards away. A car pulled up and six plain clothes police leapt out and body searched him in the street. Mail from the London group to Liverpool was delivered opened. One comrade sent two letters containing Persons Unknown and State Research pamphlets to addresses in Germany. One arrived, the other didn't. A while later the second address received an official notification from the local state that their mail was being intercepted and some material confiscated, as a 'person unknown' at that address was 'suspected of supporting a criminal organisation'.

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WHITE LION



WHITE LION Free School is facing another manifestation of the constant cycle of money problems. Last summer the School nearly had to close (see FREEDOM vol. 38 no. 13, 9.7.77). All they really needed was for the Inner London Education Authority to pay 'capitalisation', the sum per pupil provided to state schools. However, ILEA refused to do this, seemingly because they resented freedom. All schools had to fit into the state system, and White Lion Street was lumped in with prestigious 'independents' like the public schools, to be squeezed out. They were prepared to provide money for the school to be used as a dumping ground for non-attenders and the like, but the school was proudly defiant - they were a school and in effect a community centre. All the pupils lived within a few hundred yards. They weren't going to see their achievement converted into a convenient dustbin for the system's failings. They were in real trouble; their sources of funding were drying up and they said that they would have to

close in the summer.

This is the tragedy of free schools, and indeed of alternative projects in general. Those concerned wear themselves out trying to keep the venture financially viable. Everybody acknowledges the achievements, if somewhat patronisingly. And then, when the collapse comes, not smugly, "See, we said it would never work". Time has taken a heavy toll on free schools. Three have closed this year. Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds are in desperate trouble. London is now down to two - White Lion Street and Kirkdale (see FREEDOM vol. 38, no. 15, 6.8.77). The Community School in North Kensington is to become part of ILEA's 'Disruptive Pupils' Scheme'. ILEA still want to undermine the other two in this way. Kirkdale, in Sydenham, has the usual problem of premises; their building is owned by a housing association which wants to redevelop it. They avoid the immediate financial crisis to some extent by means tested parental contributions. At present they

have 35 children and four teachers.

White Lion Street has 37 primary and secondary and 15 nursery children. They have just been refused ILEA money again and said that they would have to close at Christmas. But now things look more optimistic. They have received £8,000 from the Cripplegate Foundation and a further £1,000 from the anonymous donor who helped save them last year. With new enthusiasm they have painted the front door and portico (an impressive structure; the premises are listed as of historic interest). They have also won the support of Islington council. The social services say that they would leave a huge gap if they had to close. The council have put their weight behind a recommendation that the school should receive a three year grant under the Urban Partnership Aid Scheme. The final decision will be made on 6 or 7 November and things look bright. It seems that this inspiring project has been saved.

D.P.

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H.A.G.

THE Hastings Anarchist Group continues its record of militancy. They have their own weekly newsheet (HAG News/Poison Pen) and they've been involved in many local issues. They print exposures of local dignitaries, survival advice and relevant news. Recently they were involved in disrupting a council meeting over redevelopment plans for their last remaining local cinema. They've sent FREEDOM a range of reports, a letter, the newsheet and the local paper. As they say, "We all know the capitalist press distorts the news but it really brings it home to you if you're actually involved".

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In several earlier articles, including 'Night Falls on Germany' (24 December 1977) and 'The Agit Case' (27 May 1978), FREEDOM has reported on the attack being carried out against the left in the FRG today. The following essay looks in more detail at how this is being done through the law and at the way it must be opposed, with particular reference to the censorship or muzzle law, para. 88a.

MUCH has been said about the political situation in the Federal Republic of Germany. Not only that the ruling class are prepared to do almost anything to criminalise and thus effectively neutralise counter movements within the system but, even more, that as a 'democratic' state it is obliged to legalise its repressive measures. The legal machine has made significant steps in this direction - witness the emergency laws, defence exclusion laws, continuing laws against 'terrorist association', the whole gamut of 'anti-terror' laws, to mention but a few. With such laws the FRG appears to have built up a scaffolding for future political and economic contingencies.

F.R.G-THE INNER

In January 1976 the German parliament passed a law on the 'unconstitutional advocacy of criminal acts', paragraph 88a, generally known as the 'muzzle law' (Maulkorbparagraph).

Under this law prison sentences of up to 3 years face anyone who 'distributes, publishes, announces, exhibits or in any other way makes available, or who is connected with, supplies, offers, stocks, delivers, commends' etc., books, journals, magazines or any other documentation.

Hardly had this been implemented (May 1976) than in August 1976 this law was used to justify the most massive raids yet against left-wing bookshops. On the morning of 18 August left-wing bookshops in Hamburg, Cologne, Tübingen, Heidelberg, Bochum, Berlin and Munich were searched by the security forces. Books and magazines were confiscated and four booksellers were temporarily arrested, three of them released that same day. A comrade from the 'Politische Buchhandlung' in Bochum was held for 8 days in prison. According to the search warrant the raids were directed first and foremost against the journal *Revolutionärer Zorn* (Revolutionary Rage) which is published by the Revolutionary Cells, an illegal guerrilla group operating in the FRG. The 'Andere Buchladen' (Alternative Bookshop) in Cologne was also raided, but none of the papers being searched for were found. On 11 May 1978 the trial began in the district court of Cologne of Friedhelm B., the former proprietor of the shop (see also FREEDOM, 27 May no. 10, 'The Agit Case'). He was sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment suspended on 2 years' probation and a fine of DM 1,500 for 'unconstitutional support of illegal acts' (88a). It is not important at this stage to describe the proceedings: the scenario of political trials in the FRG is already described often enough and each one is nearly always identical to the next.

In the hands of the executive, para 88a touches upon all aspects of freedom of information and opinion 'guaranteed' by article 5 of the Basic Law (Constitution). Its - deliberately - vague formulation enables both state security and state prosecution to act as they please. Para 88a is not aimed at specifically criminal acts but on the potential threat contained in the publication of books and journals which debate the issue of violence. "... We are not concerned with single works, whether books or magazines; we are not concerned with individuals ... Much more important is the question of the milieu from which they come, the question of the addressees. The people concerned are connected with these left-wing bookshops and the latter in turn are an important instrument inside the opposition movement. The state prosecution's image of the enemy is now fixed. According to its research there are 147 publishing houses, 27 booksellers and 108 bookshops which distribute around 2000 single revolutionary titles ... The VLB (Association of Left Bookshops) has already been described as a 'criminal association'. In fact the whole spectrum of debating circles which see capitalism as a class system - and thus system of violence - has been affected". (Quoted from the publicity of the Alternative Bookshop, Cologne).

Not a squeak of protest was raised against the passing of para 88a. Not even the 'progressive' wing of the Social Democrats, apart from some timid deliberation, took any action

over this direct attack on 'freedom of opinion and information'. On the contrary, they agreed with the muzzle law. Only today, now para 88a has also been aimed on 'the most blind', have critical voices been heard within the ranks of the Social Democrat and Liberal parties, regretting the passing of the law and seeking to change it. That these verbal reservations have been made merely to soothe their guilty consciences goes without saying. They have recently allied themselves with that 'rebel' fraction of their parties - as did the representative of the Writers' Union and SPD parliamentary chairman D. Lattmann - in speaking out against 88a in parliament; but Lattmann still refused to endorse that alliance when it came to the final vote.

In contrast to the ignorance to the ignorance and apathy of the 'progressive Democrats', the left recognised the extent of the threat entailed by the legalisation of censorship. It thus fell to them to take responsibility for articulating and organising opposition to it in the FRG. But despite their campaigns, demonstrations and various other actions the left has failed to galvanise public opinion. This can be attributed to two

factors:- 1) The left lives in a ghetto, into which it has increasingly withdrawn since 1969 and which is now threatening to collapse;

EMIGRATION

2) Other popular movements - in part even the citizens' action movement (1) - failed to realise that the laws covered in effect all publications.

The left's recognition of its own helplessness, however, had and has led to serious consequences, which must be acted upon. If this is not done it will no longer be possible to understand - from our point of view - the desolate situation of the German left, a situation caused not only by these laws but by the whole repressive context of the Federal Republic. But of this the application of para 88a provides a good example.

HOW IT ALL ENDS (2)

In the spring of 1978 para 88a was re-activated. No. 4 of *Revolutionärer Rage* was confiscated, shortly followed by the book *RAF Texts*, which has been published in Sweden. If in 1976 reaction to the actions of the State Security was evident and attempts at or calls to censorship, or self-censorship, rejected (on the part of the left), in 1978 there was no open debate about the actions of the 'Thought Police'. Reaction to them was one of numbed shock. There was no public outcry: the public and especially the left in Cologne, proceeded quickly with their day to day affairs.

The furtive joy (3) of the 'Thought Police' can only be met head on with public protest at each case of censorship. At the same time it is essential to hold an internal discussion on the material which is banned and confiscated. In that they are trying to ban certain books through the introduction of censorship laws, discussion on certain themes is also being made illegal. For instance, discussion within the left on the legitimacy of political violence, the need for resistance, the use of strikes in political struggle, on citizens' action groups, the structural violence of capitalist relations, the development of government secrecy, etc. The ruling class is simultaneously creating the means of criminalising discussion in those social areas which still see themselves as being supportive of the state. For example, the trade unions. A muzzle law which, in the first instance, affects a so to speak more exclusive circle, will block the development of a broader counter coalition. The confusion experienced by the West German unions and the overbearing ignorance of union officials with regard to these social tendencies, makes effective propaganda more difficult. Para 88a and also 130a - the so-called 'invitation to criminal acts' - is in this context a legal instrument guaranteeing the 'tranquillity and social peace of a Tombstone State'. In order to sell it to a bourgeois public a connection has been elaborated between criminal and political attitudes, through a replacement of political argument with emotional and tendentious manipulation of publicity.

So what does such criminalisation mean for the left bookshops? To bend the knee to state censorship is to submit to a general purge of all titles which could conceivably be banned through publishers and bookshops. How far-reaching this

would be is, however, not legally defined! It is thus left to the booksellers and publishers and printers themselves to decide how to interpret the law and how far they will go in their interpretation.

In the aftermath of the last raid on the Alternative Bookshop in Cologne it must be asked whether censorship/self censorship should not be ignored. Neither the contents of the incriminated articles, nor the attitude of the bookshop collective were opposed to open discussion. While for some, discussion on armed conflict was already resolved and an alteration of the political situation would not need re-examination of it, for others it was clear in advance that the state security people were poised to take over the shop. A discussion on the contents of Revolutionary Rage and RAF Texts was, at least in public, no longer possible. Yet argument and formation of public opinion is only possible if the problems contained in RR and RAF Texts, as well as the function of left-wing bookshops, are brought into the open. To have no open discussion is to have censorship, and self-censorship becomes superfluous. The alternative to such a state of affairs must be: an offensive against every case of censorship/self-censorship and, in consequence, a permanent formative process of public opinion.

The formation of public opinion also has another function, ie. to enable escape from the left-wing ghetto. One of the original reasons for this ghetto is surely the resignation ensuring from the rise and then collapse of the EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION, the recognition that the majority of the population in the FRG had responded little if at all to its activities. Whereas some, in a complete mis-reading of a supposedly pre-revolutionary situation, went underground, others tried to acquire a freer hand within the ruling capitalist system. The more the tendency towards a 'stronger state' crystallised here in the FRG, the more polarised the two sides became, quite apart from those who believed they could create an avant-garde through the founding of a 'communist party' of the working class.

However, the two directions outlined above are not on today's agenda. And the alternative ways, the flight into the countryside or spiritual withdrawal, far less so than going underground. Counter-action must be organised against the social tendencies towards the liquidation of opposition. This implies a fight against the illegalisation of books, papers and pamphlets, as well as the necessity of discussing forbidden subjects. Censorship cannot be fought through criticism and publicity, but rather through discussion of the subject of censorship itself. If we fail to do this then we are implicitly agreeing with those who believe that the opportunity for change in this country no longer exists. Moaning about developments in the FRG, while casting a hopeful eye over other 'democratic' countries just won't do. Italy, it should be remembered, has far harsher emergency laws.

But while the left in other countries forms public opinion,



goes out on the streets and fights it too, whole sections of the West German left have embarked upon an 'inner emigration'. Instead of taking up a political stance on current events they draw into their own private shell. Today it is vital to bang on the table, to mobilise, that is, a broad sector of public opinion, not forgetting ourselves. An important step forward would be a broad-based attack against the censorship laws, on the level of wide-ranging public discussion on the dialectic of repression and criminalisation on the one hand and the need on the other to avoid left-wing emigration, or the retreat underground or into private life. But also on the question of organisation, so as to be able to carry out effective resistance against the reality of today.

NOTES

ALFRED MARQUARDT & GRAUCHO ANDERS
(Translation by AO)

- (1) The citizens' action movement is particularly concerned with anti-nuclear activities.
- (2) Allusion to 'Bommi' Baumann's book 'How it all began'.
- (3) In the original 'klammheimliche Freude' - a phrase almost impossible to translate, but become famous with the controversial printing of 'Mescalero's' obituary of Buback in the spring of 1977.

IN BRIEF:

David McNee has gained official backing for at least some of his demands for a free hand. The Home Office is now recommending:-

The power to require a person to give his name and address,

The power to stop, question and search in the street, especially for weapons or stolen goods,

The power to search the home of an arrested person,

The power to obtain search warrants. Are we to assume that if these become official, then the rest of the police malpractice, which McNee admits to, will cease?

Meanwhile, the Law Society Gazette has carried a front page article attacking McNee's proposals.

The former Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Robert Mark, must be getting jealous at all McNee's recent publicity, so he has taken to shooting his mouth off about all and sundry. His most interesting admission is that the police don't actually provide any protection against thieves. He



says 'for the first time in this century the belief that the state can-or even wants to-protect people effectively from burglary, breaking offences and theft, should be abandoned' How about that, condemned out of their own mouths. I thought that this sort of protection was supposed to be one of the chief justifications for the existence of the state in the first place, 'can-or even wish to' indeed. So what are all these police ac-

tually for! Ask Iris, Ronan, Taff, Vince, Stew, Trev, Crispin, John, Duncan, Astrid, Liddle Towers, any black kid, gay, picketer....

Yana Mintoff and John McSherry have been fined £100 each, plus £101.50 compensation, for throwing horseshit in the House of Commons. In addition they have both been bound over, under a piece of legislation which covers crimes which "scanalise the Government"

Ramon Mercador, who killed Trotsky, has died, in Havana.

from SYDNEY
(See front page)

A pair of silk-screened posters:
DON'T VOTE, IT ONLY ENCOURAGES THEM, and
IF VOTING COULD REALLY CHANGE THINGS IT WOULD BE ILLEGAL have been produced and a leaflet is to be distributed at inner city polling booths. NB. A satirical 'Jump for Jesus' poster has also been produced by Sydney anarchists, prompted by the Mary Whitehouse tour and subsequent pleings and police attacks and 'general revival of the TOAD of NAZARETH'.

Manchester 14-15 OCTOBER a personal view

THE conference - it was much more a 'conference' than a 'festival' - was, for me, a disturbing experience. The organisation was much better than most anarchist 'events' - but of course there are always lessons to be learnt from every experience, and there was plenty of room for improvement. What got me down though was the state of the movement reflected in the attitudes of the people present. Here we are in a much celebrated period of expansion, whilst finding ourselves under considerable pressure, and all we can seem to manage in response is to dig ourselves into a bloody great hole.

We are failing to learn the lessons of history, failing to build on the foundations of our own experience and failing to come to grips with reality. In short, the movement is falling apart at the seams - and this is something we cannot afford to let happen.

My reasons for this harsh statement stem from my experiences in the workshops I attended at the conference and I would like to relate these.

PERSONS UNKNOWN

The 'Persons Unknown' workshop was on Saturday afternoon. Up to date details about the case were given verbally by members of the London support group and some discussion of the nature of the campaign followed. Basically, London appealed for the setting up of more provincial support groups, whilst those provincial groups already in existence tended to criticise London for not sending out enough information and pictures which are needed for propaganda work.

Also discussed was the way in which the initial police offensive paralysed the movement with everyone just diving for cover and hoping they wouldn't be the next ones raided. As was pointed out, the problems persist. People are still reluctant to write letters, sign anything or get involved - particularly in the defence of the six who have already been arrested. Obviously we are going to have to get over this paranoia if we are to survive as individuals or as a movement, otherwise we simply remain isolated and vulnerable. Fortunately a core of activists have shaken off this halter to some extent already and the conference session saw the setting up of two more provincial

defence committees and a general resolution to circulate needed information - so something was achieved. However, discussion which I raised on another aspect of the campaign was brushed aside without what I thought was proper consideration.

As I understand it, the police have based their strategy against the movement on a series of raids and other attacks, a few of which have resulted in arrests and the overall effect of which has been a high level of harassment. This was initially disguised to the members of the movement not directly involved by the choice of targets - When I first heard about the initial arrests I was inclined to dismiss it as Black Flag and the police force playing at cops and robbers again, and I know many other people who felt the same way - it wasn't really until I heard of the high level of harassment of the defence committees



that the urgency of the case became apparent to me.

What is more serious though was the way in which the authorities 'justified' their actions to the population at large - This has been through a combination of (i) keeping the whole operation quiet - except for the publicity surrounding the first one or two arrests - large parts of the population haven't heard about the episode at all, or if they have heard about it in the past they have by now forgotten it; and (ii) where information has been released, or has escaped, it has been muddled, vague and overloaded with unfounded sensationalism - talk of

'bombs', 'terrorist cells', 'conspiracies', unspecified 'caches of arms', 'revolutionary plots', 'necessary security' etc., - thus providing a smokescreen which few people outside the anarchist movement either care or dare to look beyond. The anarchist response (and this hasn't been corrected in any way to date) has not been to counter this at all. We have not produced the information which would clarify the situation, putting the police accusations in their deserved perspective and raising the indignation of the populace as well as of the movement. We have merely added to the confusion and hysteria. To a very large extent I think we are doing the authorities' work for them. As evidence for this claim I would cite:

- (a) the choice of name of the support group;
- (b) the stickers saying 'we are persons unknown', etc., which looked more like a promotion for a rock band and which had no accompanying activity to clarify their message whatsoever;
- (c) the pair of badges which are clever and smart for those in the know but which do nothing to take information beyond the movement, even if people see them in the street; and
- (d) the latest and most extreme example - the 'Free the Six and Fight Back' poster which, despite having a substantial text, still contains next to no facts and merely raises fears and prejudices which will turn most people against us. To use this sort of propaganda in provincial centres like Shrewsbury, or even Reading, or Southampton, could only be counter productive. And I suspect that this is the case even in larger centres like Manchester and London - except in a few small radical enclaves.

When I put this point of view in the workshop it was opposed on the grounds that 'we should not set ourselves up in judgement of our comrades, otherwise we are no better than the state'. Therefore it was claimed, the only defence should be to accept any charges made against them, any wild accusations of the most grotesque or ridiculous nature and simply say, "so what".

From a pragmatic point of view this is sheer suicide. It fails to appreciate the small size of the movement which might accept such a position and it fails completely to comprehend the paranoia and insecurity of the bulk of the population and the degree to which they are influenced by 'the bourgeois propaganda of the mass media'. This is just mindless activism - it won't 'free the six' and it isn't 'fighting back' because it doesn't present a credible threat to anyone, except possibly ourselves and the six we are trying to aid.

Anyway, the theoretical allusion as to how anarchists are supposed to apply their values is totally false. In practice we do make judgements all the time and we act on them - this is the very basis of anarchism - that we each decide for ourselves what we find acceptable and what we don't: I decide whether I support the RAF or Black Flag or 'Love vs. Pow-

er' and I make any distinctions between them I feel required to by the facts of the case; in all matters from the actions of Bill Dwyer to Kropotkin's stand on WWI, from the actions of the Brigade Rosse to the Seabrook occupations, I make up my own mind on the facts as I discover them, and where I think campaigning or other action is required and justified. I act accordingly. The alternative is to accept everything asserted by anyone who claims to be an anarchist or who is accused of being an anarchist, and to act in pursuance of their demands without setting priorities or weighing costs - and this clearly isn't what we do. We do dismiss some people as cranks, we do say some people are or are not anarchists and we do disagree on matters to the point of disassociation in some cases. To not do this is irresponsible apathy or extreme *laissez-faire-ism*, neither of which attitudes would commonly be considered as anarchist. I support the 'Persons Unknown' defence campaign because I think their kind of anarchism is worth defending and because I disapprove of the authorities, not just in general, but especially in their behaviour in this case. I make this judgement on a whole range of facts also, and that is how I think the campaign should be fought.

Most of the population should be worried by the facts of this case. The police are clearly acting 'illegally'; the persecution of the anarchist movement is without real justification; there have been important legal precedents set, like the police search of defence counsels' briefs, and the beatings administered to prisoners in court; and it is obvious that the whole episode is being used as a training exercise for the authorities, indicating that when they have finished with the anarchist movement they will turn to others, the extreme left, the gay movement, feminists, blacks, Asians, trade unionists, anti-nuke activists, environmentalists, liberals, etc. etc. If the facts and our reasoning are explained properly our case will help in mobilising anti-state feeling and activity as well as achieving the more urgent needs of freeing the six and resisting the current police offensive. This is how we can 'Free the Six and Fight Back' - and this is what isn't being done. Personally I was annoyed that this sort of question, about the real effects of our activity, was not being faced in the workshop - and I think this typified one of the failings of the movement as it manifested itself at Manchester.

THE LIBERTARIAN PRESS

The 'Libertarian Press' workshop on Sunday afternoon was well attended, mainly by people involved in bringing out papers - but there weren't many people present who were just involved as readers or as distributors as opposed to editors and printers - and this struck me as a weakness; especially as it seems to be in distribution that most anarchist publications fail.

Unfortunately people weren't really clear on why they had come to the workshop, so we wasted a lot of time. To start with we spent about 45 minutes listening to one of the editors of *The Leveller* rave about his magazine for unaligned Trots. Then we had some rather inconclusive conversation about local 'alternat-

ive' and 'community' papers which, whilst being a valuable topic for us to consider, didn't really seem to get anywhere. The failure of *Zero* received some mention and there was slightly more useful mention of *Open Road* and *Peace News* in which members of their editorial collectives spoke about production and distribution problems and how they were overcome. However, large slices of the anarchist media were not even mentioned and problems of coordinating the work of various publications or of the ever present problems of distribution and how these might be solved were hardly mentioned.

ANARCHIST ACTIVISM

The third and final workshop I attended was the one on anarchist activism; which most people walked out on - probably because it was so boring. Again people didn't really seem to have a clear idea of why they were there. So the session lacked structure or direction. This, I think, indicates a need for greater preparation of conference workshops - with position papers, discussion documents etc., being circulated in advance - and possibly a need for chairpersons.

In the discussion there was much talk of the regional federations, which ones are 'working' and which ones aren't; but no real discussion of what they might achieve or of what constituent groups can hope to do.

People tended to take for granted that demos are always productive and that communication between groups is valuable in itself, even though the groups themselves may not be doing anything; and these are matters which really need to be thrashed out with some degree of urgency. Britain - indeed the western world - may or may not be in a revolutionary period at present but capitalism is certainly in a state of deep crisis. If we don't respond constructively we will not only miss a golden opportunity, we will be made scapegoats for the system's failure and we will suffer fearfully.

We all know the failures of the Russian anarchists: That they didn't present an alternative programme to that of the bolsheviks and that they didn't build a firm foundation for their own movement with a strong cell structure and an effective resource base, and that consequently many of the best anarchist militants ended up working for the bolsheviks. What we don't seem to be facing up to is that exactly the same thing is happening here and now. Many of the best libertarian militants are working in the Labour Party or the SWP simply because there isn't a worthwhile anarchist alternative.

This point follows on from my article on *FREEDOM** and its role in the contemporary anarchist movement and I think bears out further the points I was making there. The fact that several people who were in the workshop have stopped reading *FREEDOM* only goes to confirm what I was saying - and the problem is that *FREEDOM* really is the only place where a programme and a methodology for the movement at large has any chance of being developed.

As I said at the start of this article, the contemporary anarchist movement is disintegrating and will continue to do so unless we learn the lessons of history, build

on our experiences and face up to the present reality.

THE CONFERENCE ORGANISATION

I now turn to look at some of the more general aspects of the weekend:-

One of the most striking aspects of the event was that just about every 'wing' of the anarchist movement was represented and in the light of this, it was good that no major slanging matches occurred; but then there didn't seem to be a great deal of dialogue either, and a lot of agreement was achieved by glossing over differences rather than talking them out. In fact, the weekend was marked by a strong measure of superficiality. I found this in all the workshops I attended and I heard of it in reports of most (though not all) the other workshops. In part this was because the sessions were largely unchaired and unprepared, but largely it was simply reflecting the state of the movement at large.

The superficiality also carried over into organisational aspects of the 'festival' like the creche, the food and the accommodation. Lessons were learnt from the Lancaster experience earlier this year but only in a superficial way. Thus, the creche that had been promised did happen, a room was set aside, toys were brought in a volunteer roster was posted, but no attempt was made to ascertain the expertise or otherwise of the volunteers, so sometimes there was a surfeit of people experienced in and good at handling kids, other times there was just a large congregation of bewildered adults who could do little more than look on whilst the kids tore each other apart. Also, there wasn't even a pretence at catering for kids under the age of about 3 years. And in the case of food, it turned out that volunteers were wanted to help with the catering, even though no warning was given in the booking information and no roster was in evidence; hence some people ended up doing oppressively long shifts of which most people attending just weren't aware.

Lest these remarks seem too harsh I must hasten to say that in view of the fact that the conference was organised and run by only four people it was a remarkable tribute to them that these things worked at all. At a minimum level they did at least function. But serious problems did remain. I think this indicates that if events on such a scale are to be held they need to be organised by larger groups, and that for people to take on more than they can really handle is unfair on themselves and on the potential users of the resources they promise to create and make available.

In conclusion I would say that, as with the Lancaster conference, the weekend made me feel a definite need for more thorough organisation and preparation for future conferences, and a need for conferences on more specific matters so that concrete results may come out of them. But, the feeling this time went deeper and I would say that the movement in all its aspects needs to take stock of itself and pull itself together.

ALAN WESTFALL

* Alan's article on *FREEDOM* will be published in a forthcoming issue.

FREEDOMS CONTACTS PAGE

WE WELCOME News, reviews, articles, letters, cartoons, etc. Copy deadline for next issue, Monday, 6 November. Send to Editors, **FREEDOM**, 84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley), London E1.

NEXT DESPATCHING DATE:
Thursday, 9 November.

Groups

ABERYSTWYTH. Mike Sheehan, 2 South St. Aberystrwyth

BRISTOL City. 4 British Road, Bristol BS3 3BW

BRISTOL Students. Libertarian Society, Students Union, Queen's Road, Bristol 8.

CAMBRIDGE. Raphael Salkie, Queen's College, Cambridge

Cardiff Anarchist Group: Write c/o 108 Bookshop, Salisbury Road, Cardiff.

CORBY. Terry Phillips, 7 Cresswell Walk, Corby, Northants.

COVENTRY. John England, 48 Spencer Av, Earlsdon, Coventry

DERBY (and environs) Anarchists/Libertarians. All two of us welcome collaborators. Contact Andrew Huckerby, 49 Westleigh Av, Derby DE3 3BY, tel: 368678

EAST ANGLIAN Libertarians, Martyn Everett, 11 Gibson Gardens, Saffron Walden, Essex
EXETER Anarchist Society, Univ. of Exeter, Devonshire House, Stocker Road, Exeter
HASTINGS. Steve, 18a Markwick Terrace, St Leonards-on-sea, Sussex

HIGH BENTHAM. Ask at The Dragonfly on Market Day (Wednesday)

HUDDERSFIELD anarchist group: meetings every two weeks. For details phone 0484-38156 (Poly-technic students' union).

LEAMINGTON & Warwick, c/o 42 Bath St. Leamington Spa

LEEDS. Box 101 'Leeds Other Paper', 30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2

MALVERN & Worcester area. Jock Spence, Birchwood Hall, Storridge, Malvern, Worcs.

MANCHESTER. See NW Federation

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE. Black Jake, c/o 115 Westgate Road, Newcastle NE1 4AG

NORWICH Anarchist Group, c/o Mushroom, 10 Heathcote St (tel: 582506) or 15 Scotholme Av, Hyson Green (tel: 708302)

OXFORD - suspended during vacation

PORTSMOUTH - change of address pending

READING University anarchists, c/o Students Union, Univ. of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading, Berks.

SHEFFIELD Autonomous Anarchists. Write to Sheffield Libertarian Society, P.O. Box 168, Sheffield S11 8SE

The groups at the above address are: Sheffield Autonomous Anarchists, Black Cross Group, TWW, Syndicate of Initiative, John Creaghe Memorial Society

SWANSEA. Don Williams, 24 Derlwyn, Dunvant, Swansea

THAMES VALLEY Adele Dawson, Maymeade, 6 Congress Rd, Maidenhead (tel: 062 2974)

WESTON-super-Mare. Martyn Redman, Flat 5, 23 Milton Rd, Weston-super-Mare, Som.

WILTSHIRE. Comrades in Swindon wish to start an anarchist group (as well as existing Community Arts Group). Get in touch with

Mike, Groundswell Farm, Upper Stratton, Swindon, Wilts.

FEDERATIONS

LONDON

Anarchist Communist Assn, c/o 182 Upper St, Islington N.1.

Anarchy Collective, 37a Grosvenor Av. Tel: 359-4794 before 7 pm.

Freedom Collective, 84b Whitechapel High St (Angel Alley), E1 (tel: 247-9249)

Hackney Anarchists. Contact Dave on 249-7042

Kingston Anarchists, 13 Denmark Road, Kingston upon Thames (tel: 549-2564)

London Workers' Group, Box W. 182 Upper St. N.1. (Tel: 249-7042)

Love v. Power, Box 779, Peace News (London office: 5 Caledonian Road)

West London Anarchists, 7 Pennard Road, W12

KENT

Ramsgate: Peter Ford, 22 Royal Road

Sevenoaks: Jim Endesby, 70 Bradbourne Road

MIDLANDS

Secretariat: c/o Andrew Huckersby, 49 Westleigh Av, Derby DE3 3BY, tel: 0332-3686 678

Groups in the Federation include Corby, Coventry, Derby, Leamington/Warwick, Nottingham, Oxford, Sheffield (all separately listed), Birmingham. Also:

LEICESTER. Contact: Lyn Hurst, 41 Briarfield Drive, Leicester, tel: 0533-21250 (days) or 0533-414060 (nights).

Newly formed

NORTH-EASTERN ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Secretariat: Leeds Anarchists, Box 101, 30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2. Publishes mthly bulletin.

NORTH-WEST ANARCHIST FEDERATION

c/o Grass Roots, 109 Oxford Rd, Manchester M1
Newsletter & quarterly meetings. Contacts in other areas.

MANCHESTER SOLIDARITY group has also recently reformed and now holds regular monthly meetings. Our members are involved in a number of local groups and activities which takes up much of our time but we intend to arrange some occasional 'readers meetings' to discuss specific 'Solidarity' politics. For further information write to: SOLIDARITY (Manchester), c/o 109 Oxford Rd, Manchester 13.

SCOTTISH LIBERTARIAN FEDERATION

Secretary: Nina Woodcock, 17 Cheviot Cres., Flintry, Dundee.

Aberdeen: c/o A.P.P., 163 King Street

Glasgow: c/o Box G.P.P., 146 Holland Street, Glasgow G2 4NG

ADDITIONS TO GROUPS:-

LEICESTER. Anarchist group. Lyn Hurst, 41 Briarfield Drive, Leicester.

Tel: 0533-21250 (days)

0533-414060 (nights)

Bookshop. Blackthorn, 77 Highcross St, Leicester. Tel: 0533-21896.

Libertarian Education, 6 Beaconsfield Rd, Leicester. Tel: 0533-552085.

CHELTENHAM Anarchist Group. Contact JERRY at 23093.

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Meetings

RELEASE THE 6 BENEFIT.

Classical guitar, Julian Wright.
Music by Hector Villa-Lobos, John W. Duarte, John Dowland, Terence Croucher, Alexander Tansman, JS Bach, Moreno-Torroba, Isaac Albeniz, Francisco Tarrega.

At Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Monday, 30 October. 7.30 pm. Tickets £1.00. Unwaged 50p.

'Independent Workers' Groups - What Are They?' A public meeting organised by London Workers' Group. 30 October. Rising Free. 8.00 pm.

Direct Action Movement. Anarcho-syndicalist Conference. 11/12 November Sat. 11. 10.00-1.00 (small) Conway Hall. 2.00-6.00 Holborn Library small hall. Sun. 12. 10.00-6.00 (small) Conway Hall. Creche, socials etc. More details from Box W., 182 Upper St, Islington, N.1.

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